

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 066 253

RC 006 371

AUTHOR Dziabala, Stefan
TITLE Some Generalizations of Research Findings on
Authority in Poland's Rural Areas.
PUB DATE Aug 72
NOTE 13p.; Paper prepared for Third World Congress of
Rural Sociology, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August
1972
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Agricultural Production; *Culture; Farmers;
*Literature Reviews; *Power Structure; *Rural Areas;
*Social Behavior; Social Change
IDENTIFIERS *Poland

ABSTRACT

The concept of authority is described as functioning, in Poland's rural areas, as a factor consolidating social ties and integrating the group internally. The historical change the concept has undergone in the rural community is presented through reviews of other research on rural authority. The different types of rural authority discussed are (1) the authority of farmers, (2) authorities with individualistic attitudes and authorities with social attitudes, (3) the authority of the farmer "patriarch" (owner of a fairly large, family type farm who employs hired labor), and (4) the authority of civic leaders. These authorities tend to influence agriculture and agricultural production. Their influence also extends into the spheres of upbringing and educating children, public institutions and organizations, and the rural inhabitants' social behavior. These influences are briefly discussed. (NQ)

EU 066255

THIRD WORLD CONGRESS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY
Baton Rouge, USA, August 1972



STEFAN DZIABALA

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SECTION OF RURAL AND TOWN SOCIOLOGY
COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
SECTION OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE
POLISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

STEFAN DZIABALA

The Higher School of Social Science

SOME GENERALIZATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON
AUTHORITY IN POLAND'S RURAL AREAS

Authority is a constant element of social life. It is manifested in all types of societies and communities of a class character or classless, in large and small structures, in societies of different world views and varied cultures. But the authority phenomenon is most intrinsic to small communities which are socially and culturally more uniform than a large collectivity (the big city, for instance). There it as a rule fulfills the function of a factor consolidating social ties and integrating the group internally.

The concept "authority" is not used uniformly in scientific terminology or in everyday life. It most often has a double meaning: a) as designating social esteem based on given values represented by a group, institution or individual (for instance, in the field of knowledge, professional skill, character, efficiency, undertaking decisions in accord with the feeling of social justice, etc.); and b) individuals enjoying high social prestige and are considered authorities in their groups. In the latter meaning, the group of people most esteemed in the village which occupy the centre of public recognition constitute the "rural authority".

Authority in the rural community has undergone historical change. It is correlated with the type of socio-economic formation and the social, economic and cultural relations obtaining in the countryside. As examples may be cited the types of authority corresponding to the social and economic relations of the feudal or capitalist village and the village undergoing the process of socialist transformation. Scientific and social considerations dictate serious examination of the nature of the evolution of values which are the basis of public esteem in the rural areas as well as sociological research on the representatives of those values (the rural authority). An analysis is furthermore called for of the spheres of social life in the countryside where authority is most deeply expressed. All this is indispensable to any attempt to influence the direction of evolution of authority and to mould it in a way consonant with the ideological, political and moral principles of socialism.

Review of the more important research on
rural authority

The question of social authority in Poland's rural areas is partly reflected in sociological and ethnographic literature of the inter-war period. Former rural authority is treated as an essential component of traditional rural culture /1/ which designates the direction of its evolution. Treatment of this question continued after World War II, among others, by Kazimierz Dobrowolski and his pupils in their studies on the transformation of the traditional peasant family and folk culture /2/, by Edward Ciupka on the changes in the traditional rural parish /3/, the monographic case study of Dyzma Galaj on Sochen village in Lowic County /4/ and the dissertations of Jadwiga Marek on leadership in the farmer's vocation /5/. Her research, supplemented by periodic investigations of the Institute of Agricultural Economy, embraced 80 villages. It included an opinion poll of rural inhabitants regarding whom they considered leading farmers and objective verification of the traits of farms regarded as leading ones. Although based on differing research principles (single village case studies, historical research on a regional scale and of representative national sample), these researches have many points in common. Besides providing detailed descriptions of investigated villages, they enable the formulation of the general hypothesis that public recognition is the chief indicator of leadership in the farmer's vocation.

The research conducted in 1961 by the Sociology Workshop at the Higher School of Social Science under the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party had somewhat different aims. The research embraced 20 villages, especially those constantly polled by the Institute of Agricultural Economy. It pertained to the relation between rural authorities and the members of rural organizations of the Polish United Workers Party /6/. The question of rural authority was also investigated by Daniel Markowski in a village of Cracow province. He analyzed the differentiation in the conception of prestige in the rural inhabitants' system of values and in the pattern of "a decent person" in their awareness /7/. In 1969 the Workshop on the Investigation of Industrialized Regions at the Polish Academy of Sciences made a study of authority in the agricultural profession and of the public authority in 15 villages of Plock region. More deep-going monographic research on the question was conducted in 1960-64 in the Rogozino hamlet villages of Plock county /8/.

Authority is an integral component of the rural social system. It is correlated with other elements of that system such as: the peasant family, the farm and the category of the agricultural occupation. However, authority manifests itself most completely on the scale of the rural community as a whole, for only then can it appear as a phenomenon of a wide range of social acceptance.

The range of its acceptance and the factors constituting criteria of authority in the rural areas (or at least of identification with its top circles) are differentiated. For

there are circles in the countryside who appear solely in the category of esteem in the public consciousness. As a rule, they don't hold official positions nor do they exert any essential influence on rural institutions and organizations. They are respected for their personal traits of character, for being good farmers or for their relations with their neighbours. If esteemed individuals be divided into three groups: those enjoying most, medium and small support, then it is the middle group which appears solely in the category of personal respect. There are also circles which appear simultaneously in the esteem and influence categories /9/. Both categories react on each other. Those combining both categories (farmers and representatives of non-agricultural occupations) are more lasting authorities with a wider range of social acceptance and greater possibilities of influencing the activity of rural institutions and organizations in which they most often fulfill public functions. There are also circles which function with true public spirit exclusively in the influence category. The Rogozino research indicates that these are primarily functionaries in local institutions. Those of that category are relatively the most educated in the village. Most of them are members of the Polish United Workers Party or the United Peoples Party and the vast majority fulfill some function, and may without doubt be regarded as local government representatives.

A historical examination of the changes in the category of rural authority, and especially modern empirical research prove that the division into external authority over the village and its own internal authority no longer corresponds to the realities of the contemporary Polish village. Dominant now is the internal type of authority the representatives of which are most frequently leading peasant-farmers. The former external authority, represented by the teacher, priest and intellectual, among others, no longer fulfill their previous functions. Their present day prototypes are accepted by the village inhabitants only to the extent that they participate in public life as part of them, to the extent that they participate in the local institutions and organizations as equal partners of the peasant authorities.

The division into personal (in the traditional sense) and institutional authority, i.e., the authorities of public institutions and organizations which influence rural life, is also losing its significance. For the individuals constituting the authorities today are most often involved in the activity of the system of rural local institutions and organizations, even if they carry no official public function. The growing institutionalization of rural life is a characteristic feature of rural development. People held in public esteem who desire to lead the community of which they are members must actively engage in the activity of the rural institutions and organizations. Their social status is to a great degree determined by their role in them.

Research further indicates that the range of problems rural authority is involved in is not wide. These are: questions of agricultural production, the work of various insti-

tutions and organizations and, in that connection, contact with outside institutions and organizations, organization of the collective initiative of the village for the satisfaction of some economic, social or cultural needs, youth upbringing and education. In Rogozino this last was the subject of constant concern by the authorities as is reflected in numerous statements by respondent inhabitants. Rural social customs and religion are beyond the competence of the authority.

Empirical research data suggest a certain regularity in the degree of public acceptance of rural authority, as expressed in the number of votes of support in the poll. It is possible to distinguish according to that criterion a number of individuals recognized as "private authority" and a smaller group accepted by a large number of rural inhabitants. It is only the latter who actually count in rural public opinion. They function as the authority on a village scale in all matters of ties with the supralocal world.

The Rogozino research provides interesting information on the social changes in the content of recognized authority in the rural community. It confirms the anticipated directions of development of future village authority and the dislodgement of the traditional content of rural life (of customs and religion and those associated with landed property) by modern rational values. This is expressed in the economic sphere as in behaviour and attitude. The supplanting of traditional by rational values - as a constant process - despite certain checks, is marked by dialectical contradictions. The problem of surmounting these contradictions in a rational direction has been historically resolved by Poland. That solution is determined by the needs of contemporary industrial civilization, the prevailing social and political system and the co-acting factors of internal rural forces.

There is a group among the values signifying authority in the rural areas which is composed of the elements of a personality pattern worthy of emulation. These are the positive character traits: honesty, reliability, solidity, industriousness, thrift, modesty, friendliness and correct family life /10/, which are relatively universal. They basically appear in all social formations, although their content is subject to certain changes in different socio-cultural environments. Research conducted in the large city community with institutions of a formal structure which fulfill other public functions than in the rural areas also shows that the values of character are the chief determinants of esteem and confidence. Authority in various social milieus, first of all in the village, is hence to a considerable degree determined by universal and centuries old standards of social life. The vitality and driving force of these standards are sustained in the rural areas by the peculiarity of their historical development and the sociological features of the rural community. They are moreover ever more frequently supplemented by changes in their historical content. It is characteristic that piety or other religious values were not mentioned once in Rogozino as criteria of esteem. Mentioned were decidedly lay values.

Professional and civic values also loom large in determining authority. There is every indication that a pattern of authority by specialists is taking shape in the rural areas. An indispensable condition for this process are the following demographic, social and personal traits the specialist should display: education, knowledge, long professional practice, active participation in rural institutions and organizations as well as ability and intelligence. The growing importance of the professional, civic and personality values may be expected to lead to the situation where the training of specialist and institutional authority becomes a universal phenomenon. This may justify the title "new universal authority". One of its attributes in the obliteration of the distinction between expert and moral authority, on the basis of given individuals accumulating a set of moral values highly rated and approved by the community.

Criteria for an authority typology

Empirical research enables a typology of the authority taking shape in the contemporary Polish village. The complexity of the phenomenon and multiplicity of its content dictates the need of applying several, sometimes criss-crossing, criteria of typology.

Rural authority should thus be distinguished in respect of the range of social acceptance: a) narrow group authority (at times individual) and public "peripheral" authority, b) authority on a village scale of wide public acceptance. The latter actually functions in the village community and in the inhabitants' social consciousness and constitutes the motive force of transformation of the traditional into the modern village.

According to the professional criterion, may be distinguished the authority of farmers and that of representatives of non-agricultural occupations (most often functionaries of rural institutions and organizations, sometimes teachers). The latter category's professional work often meshes with the social activity associated with their public function. They are hence at the same time functionaries and public leaders.

In relation to its social source authority may be distinguished as based on: a) elements of personality patterns (character traits and attributes of thought), b) professional values and public involvements.

Comparative research on the small town /11/ and big city /12/ community points to the universality of values constituting the basis of public recognition (esteem). These are general social moral norms which guarantee the coexistence of and integrate the collectivity.

While the representatives of non-agricultural occupations are to be found among the rural authorities, they are predominantly farmers. Peasants who rose into positions of authority on account of being good farmers mainly function in villages of a high cultural level, closely linked with the town market. They are in the main middle farmers. But size

of the farm is only one source of their authority alongside with the volume of agricultural output, equipment with means of production and often production innovation. The average age of these authorities is as a rule higher than or at least equal to that of the average head of family. While their general education and readership of the agricultural and daily press are above the average village level. This suggests a deeper knowledge of social and political questions. Their period of residence in the village is also rather long (the majority since birth, others not less than several years), which would indicate that being rooted in the village is an important factor in shaping the stereotype of authority in the public awareness.

Farmers' authority stemming from professional values is not a uniform category. One of the axes of polarization is the extent of modernity of the farm and its influence on the authority's social position. The following may be distinguished according to these criteria: a) authorities whose farms are rather traditional, although very good and b) the authority of owners of modern farms. The former are reluctant to undertake the risk of new cultures or animal breeding techniques and react more slowly to the incentives provided by the government and the market. They display a rather passive attitude to public or economic matters outside their own farm or village. Whereas the esteemed owners of modern farms boldly introduce new cultures, maintain many contacts with economic, social and political institutions in the county, are as a rule economic and public activists on a village scale and often also function in the system of hamlet or county organizations.

Two polar subtypes may be distinguished in relation to the farmer authority's attitude to matters of the rural community (extent of socialization of attitude): authorities with individualistic and those with social attitudes. The first usually do not fulfill any public function and don't display special interest in the village's social questions. They are non-party and the chief motive of their activity is personal profit. Their goal is to possess a rich medium-sized farm based on the labour of the peasant family. These attitudes clearly reflect the interests of the peasant as a petty commodity producer. The individualism of this part of the peasant authority does not exclude a certain socialization. But is a socialization on an elementary level (maintenance of active relations with other village inhabitants mainly in the areas of agricultural production and neighbourly activity) without serious involvement in the social problems of the village.

The socialization of farmer authorities with attitudes of involvement in social affairs is mainly expressed in institutionalized forms. They are most frequently active members of the rural bodies of the Polish United Workers Party or the United Peoples Party as well as of professional and cooperative organizations, are members of local Peoples Councils, etc. This subtype of authority is not uniformly correlated with the size of its representative's farm. True, the

attitude of public engagement is mainly shown by the middle farmer but it is also to be found among small and larger than middle farmers. Their interests in general village affairs revolve around production, health, cultural and educational questions. They carry many public functions and are connected with county, branch, district and even central institutions. Although convinced of the possibility of intensifying production on the small farm, they are indifferent to the development of cooperative forms and the deepening socialization processes.

Another subtype of rural authority is the farmer "patriarch", owner of a fairly large family type farm but employing hired labour. This type is represented by a linking of universally acknowledged values with elements of an individualistic attitude and of social involvement at the same time. Such authorities are still to be found in Pomeranian and Poznan villages /13/. They often present values in the form of personality patterns worthy of emulation and are model farmers. Good husbandmen of a high intellectual level, these are often initiators of economic undertakings on a village scale. Here is a classical example of an outgrowth of the old social and cultural relations within the new social reality.

Civic leadership is another source of authority in the rural areas. This category of authority is based on public leadership and is formed by farmers and individuals from non-farming occupations whose public activity merges with their professional work and those who carry on their civic activity alongside their professional work. The rank of this category will undoubtedly grow in villages which are on the way to socialism. It is a product of the village's historical development and of its place in the macrostructure of socialist society. It answers the social needs of the village and creates favourable opportunities for the socialization of its current and prospective requirements. Authority based on public leadership corresponds to the principles of socialist ideology and its requirements of personal activity, a feeling of responsibility to society, affirmation of one's personality and realization of individual's socialization. It is at the same time the answer of the socialist reality to the theory of alienation advocated by certain humanist circles.

Authority by virtue of public leadership is closely linked with the functioning of rural institutions and organizations and various specialized associations. It is implemented in great measure by fulfilling given functions in such institutions. Research establishes that in socialist society undergoing the process of accelerated industrialization and intensive production there is a conspicuous rise in the role of organized activity of purposeful associations in contrast to the spontaneous activity of the individual /14/. This means that the social importance of the leader-activist depends primarily on his institutionally fulfilled functions and secondarily on his personal traits. It may be asserted on the basis of research on rural authority that this regularity is expressed in the village in an attenuated form. The activity

of rural civic leaders in various institutions is an important but not the only condition for exerting authority. An important additional condition is that the activists in institutions and organizations be respected in the rural community for their character traits. Only the merger of both creates a socially favourable climate for authority.

Social research on the question of authority in the rural and other communities fulfills an important role in deepening our knowledge of the components of social life and their evolution in the epoch of stormy industrialization and socialist construction in Poland. Both these factors delineate the direction and tempo of economic, social, cultural and political change in the rural areas. The transition of the village to the new period of historical development, implementation of the socialist state's agrarian policy and their material results are in themselves important problems of scientific cognition. Another part of social reality is the rural inhabitants' social consciousness and the values they acknowledge. The values making for social esteem (authority) in the village play a particularly important role. A systematic analysis of the objective determinants of authority, the nature of the values designating it and the role and place of people in authority in village life - these are important links in enriching sociological theory of Polish society.

Deeper knowledge of the phenomenon of rural authority is mainly indispensable for the reason that it plays such an important role in modernizing and increasing agricultural production and in moulding the consciousness, and partly also the behaviour, of rural inhabitants. With the economic, political-structural and cultural-civilizing changes undergone by the Polish village since the end of World War II came a process of replacing the traditional authority and conservative traits of the rural community and the shaping of a modern authority. The new authorities are endowed with public respect because of their set of values esteemed in the rural areas: positive personal characteristics, professional standing and cooperativeness.

Being good farmers plays an important role in the authorities' influence on agriculture. This is confirmed by many Polish rural sociologists. It is one of the chief criteria of social esteem in the village. Being a good farmer consists in applying modern agrotechnical methods (mechanization of cultivation and animal breeding, melioration measures, use of insecticides, and of insemination, specialization in cultivation and breeding) and in attaining high yields and income.

Good farming, which makes it possible to increase the volume of marketable produce, helps to stabilize the state market and to improve the material and cultural conditions of the farmers themselves. It also inclines the rural authorities to undertake the role of expert advisors to other farmers and to rural professional and self-governing institutions (the Agricultural Circles, provision and marketing cooperatives, unions of planters and animal breeders, etc.) as well as cultural and educational institutions. The Rogozin

villagers thus sought advice among farmer-authorities (on questions of supplying the village with artificial fertilizers and chemical pesticides, contracting rootcrops and grain, utilizing the Agricultural Circles' machinery service, on taxes, etc.) because they often fulfilled social and economic functions of importance to the village. Rogozino's leading farmers, accepted as authorities, lectured at courses for farmers organized by the General University. It could be expected then that the good farms of the farmer-authorities would serve as a model for other farmers, although professional emulation was not adequately reflected in the research. While the authorities appeared in the role of neighbourly advisors on professional questions and for institutions more frequently on general village affairs.

Besides agriculture, the modern rural authorities also influence other spheres of rural social life, to a greater or lesser degree. The Rogozin research indicates that the upbringing and education of children and youth is a matter of particular concern of the authorities. (The school director, one of the local men of authority, occupied himself with these matters professionally but with passion; nor were the other publicly esteemed farmers indifferent). It is to the initiative and activity of the local authority that Rogozin owes the expansion of the local school, the building of a new teachers' home and library as well as the permanent communication with Plock, a city of 100,000 inhabitants. The authorities influence the cultural life of the village by personal example. They are as a rule well educated, read many books and periodicals (including professional) and have a wider professional, political and social knowledge than the other villagers. They look after the education of their children, their farms are equipped with agricultural machinery and their homes with central heating and sanitary facilities, while some have telephones. This is not yet a universal standard under Polish rural conditions, even in well to do and suburban villages.

Customs and religious affairs are outside the sphere of interest or influence of the rural authorities. The research does not indicate that the local people of authority played any greater role than the other inhabitants in relation to the traditional customs of the rural community: elders officiating at weddings, acting as godparents, matchmakers, etc. Family life in Rogozin is individualized, to a great extent, like in urban communities. Nor did the rural authorities display any activity in the sphere of religious life (for instance, organizing material aid for the church, acting as religious leaders of the community, participating in the work of church institutions and organizations, such as the parish council).

Public institutions and organizations constitute the most important sphere of influence of rural authorities. In Rogozin most of them fulfilled some public function (head of a hamlet, member of the hamlet Peoples Council or chairman of its commissions, president of an Agricultural Circle as well as different functions in the unions of sugar beet planters, animal breeders or of raisers of fowl, etc.). Acti-

vity in public organizations and institutions opens up possibilities for their influencing various circles of rural inhabitants: those associated in hamlet organizations (the Agricultural Circle, for instance), inhabitants of the neighbouring villages' administrative center, the hamlet Peoples Council and committees of political parties, extra-hamlet institutions (the peasant cooperative "Self-Help" and savings and loan cooperative) and often on a county scale. These rural institutions and organizations to a great degree decide matters of importance of the village: farm investment, social and cultural questions. They also mobilize the rural community to undertake voluntary public projects which accelerate the social, economic and cultural development of the village.

Authority in the village based on fulfillment of some public function is generally associated with personal involvement and often with a passion for public service. As indicated, rural authority exerts an influence over the community by dint of example: of personality and character. Villagers generally regard the following traits as criteria of authority: honesty, diligence, thrift, reliability, responsibility, modesty and good relations with neighbours and the entire village.

One very important expression of the influence of rural authority on the village community and on agriculture is the formulations of rational opinions, in accord with the interests of the village, and demands upon government representatives. These opinions are sometimes a kind of anticipation of later government decisions on the direction of agricultural production and mechanization, the farmers' vocational training, the development of services for the village and agriculture, the rights and competence of local government, for instance, etc.

The shaping of new premises for rural authority, based chiefly on professional and cooperative values, has important social consequences. It is a significant link in the process of the rural inhabitants' awareness, in recasting social relations on the countryside and rendering more dynamic its material and cultural development.

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